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DESCRIPTION

SCANNER APPARATUS

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001]

The present invention relates to a scanner apparatus provided with both a flatbed-type mechanism and an auto-document feeder (ADF)-type mechanism. Specifically, the present invention realizes a scanner apparatus in which the ADF and flatbed mechanisms are separated from each other, which includes a mechanism for enabling the ADF mechanism to be set at an arbitrary position with an arbitrary orientation for use thereof, thereby increasing the freedom of setting of the apparatus and making it easier to use for both left and right-handed users, and which can simultaneously perform reading with the flatbed unit and reading with the ADF unit.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002]

There are mainly two types of scanner apparatuses; i.e., a flatbed-type shown in FIG. 9(A), which is suitable for reading books, magazines, or the like; and an ADF-type shown in FIG. 9(B), which can continuously read papers having a predetermined size and a sheet-like shape. The ADF-type is convenient in that it can automatically and continuously feed sheet-shaped documents having a predetermined size so as to

perform reading processing. Nonetheless, it cannot read thick documents such as books and magazines. On the other hand, the flatbed-type can read thick documents such as books and magazines, however, the user must set the documents on the apparatus themselves and continuous reading cannot be performed. As described above, each of the flatbed-type scanner apparatus and the ADF-type scanner apparatus is suitable for some objects to be read, but not suitable for other objects to be read. For scanner users, a scanner apparatus having both the functions is desired.

[0003]

Conventionally, there has been proposed a scanner apparatus which includes both a flatbed-type mechanism and an ADF-type mechanism as shown in FIG. 10 (see, for example, Patent Document 1). Such a scanner apparatus provided with both the flatbed-type mechanism and the ADF-type mechanism has the ADF mechanism mounted on the upper portion of the paper-pressing board of the flatbed unit in order to reduce the area occupied by the installed apparatus. The orientation of the shooter of the ADF mechanism is set and fixed so as to be easy to use for right-handed users with regard to convenience when setting the paper. Due to the position and orientation of the shooter of the ADF mechanism being set in this manner, there has been a problem in that convenience for left-handed users is sacrificed and freedom with regard to the place where the apparatus itself can be set is lessened.

[0004]

Further, in a conventional scanning apparatus provided with both the flatbed-type and ADF-type mechanisms, the ADF mechanism is coupled or attached to the upper portion of the paper-pressing board of the flatbed mechanism. For this reason, when reading is performed with the flatbed unit, reading cannot be performed with the ADF unit and when reading is performed with the ADF unit, reading cannot be performed with the flatbed unit, so reading with both units cannot be coordinated.

Patent Document 1: Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open (kokai) No. 2000-295391

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED BY THE INVENTION

[0005]

The object of the present invention is to solve the above-mentioned problem and to provide a scanner apparatus provided with both a flatbed-type mechanism and an ADF-type mechanism, wherein the ADF mechanism can be set at an arbitrary position with an arbitrary orientation for use thereof, to thereby improve convenience for the user and ensure a degree of freedom regarding the place where the apparatus is set. Furthermore, reading with the flatbed unit and reading with the ADF unit can be performed simultaneously.

MEANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM

[0006]

The scanner apparatus of the present invention is provided with both a flatbed mechanism and an ADF mechanism. The ADF mechanism is supported via a movable coupling mechanism so that the relative position and orientation of the ADF mechanism in relation to the flatbed mechanism can be changed.

[0007]

A movable coupling mechanism is provided at a joint portion between the ADF mechanism and the flatbed mechanism. The movable coupling mechanism does not fix the position and orientation of the ADF mechanism and enables the ADF mechanism to be freely moved and rotated. With this movable coupling mechanism, the ADF mechanism can be disposed at either of the left and right ends of the paper-pressing board of the flatbed unit or at an arbitrarily position in consideration of convenience for a user and the setting place of the apparatus. Further, the orientation of the shooter of the ADF mechanism can be freely changed.

EFFECT OF THE INVENTION

[0008]

According to the present invention, the ADF mechanism can be set at an arbitrary position with an arbitrary orientation in accordance with a user's handedness or the setting place. In addition, since the ADF mechanism is disposed at a position where the ADF mechanism does not hinder reading with the flatbed mechanism, reading with the ADF mechanism and reading with the flatbed mechanism can be

simultaneously performed, and these reading functions can be coordinated with each other.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009]

FIG. 1 is an overall structural diagram of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a pair of explanatory diagrams each showing the position and orientation of a shooter.

FIG. 3 is an explanatory diagram showing the case where an ADF mechanism is disposed at the central portion of the apparatus.

FIG. 4 is a pair of explanatory diagrams showing the freedom of configuration realized by the movable coupling portion of the ADF mechanism.

FIG. 5 is a first pair of explanatory diagrams showing the case where an ADF mechanism support base is provided.

FIG. 6 is a second pair of explanatory diagrams showing the case where the ADF mechanism support base is provided.

FIG. 7 is an explanatory diagram showing the case where an insertion-type coupling portion is used.

FIG. 8 is an explanatory diagram showing the case where the ADF mechanism itself slides along the rail.

FIG. 9 is a pair of explanatory diagrams showing conventional flatbed-type and ADF-type scanner apparatuses.

FIG. 10 is an explanatory diagram of a conventional scanner apparatus provided with both a flatbed-type function and an

ADF-type function.

DESCRIPTION OF SYMBOLS

[0010]

- 1: ADF mechanism
- 2: flatbed mechanism
- 3: paper-pressing board
- 4: rail
- 5: slider
- 6: rotating post
- 7: shooter
- 8: stacker
- 9: ADF mechanism support base
- 10: coupling protrusion
- 11: attachment hole

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0011]

Hereafter, the present invention will be explained based on an example. FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of a scanner apparatus which embodies the present invention. An ADF mechanism 1 is provided on the upper portion of a flatbed mechanism 2 via a movable coupling mechanism. This configuration enables the position and orientation of the ADF mechanism 1 relative to the flatbed mechanism 2 to be freely determined and set. This movable coupling mechanism includes rails 4 which are formed from, for example, elongated protrusions and which are provided on the opposite side

surfaces of a paper-pressing board 3; and a slider 5 that is movable to the left and right along the rails 4. As shown in the drawing, the slider 5, which is formed from an elongated plate member, is bent inwards at its left and right end portions, and the distal ends of the bent portions are engaged with the lower surfaces of the rails 4. The main body of the ADF mechanism 1 is coupled with a rotating post 6 on the upper surface of this slider 5. Due to this configuration, the main body of the ADF mechanism 1 is rotatably supported on the slider 5. This makes it possible for the ADF mechanism 1 to be disposed at an arbitrary position and with an arbitrary orientation relative to the flatbed mechanism 2, and the ADF mechanism 1 can be disposed in the most appropriate position in consideration the handedness of the user, the place where the apparatus will be set, and other factors.

[0012]

Since the ADF mechanism 1 is mounted on the upper portion of the flatbed mechanism 2, an ADF mechanism support base can be provided at a position where the ADF mechanism 1 does not hinder the opening and closing of the paper-pressing board of the flatbed mechanism 2. The ADF mechanism 1 can be disposed on the ADF mechanism support base with a movable coupling mechanism such that it does not hinder the opening and closing of the paper-pressing board of the flatbed mechanism. By virtue of this configuration, image reading processing by the ADF mechanism and image reading processing

by the flatbed mechanism can be performed simultaneously, and the image reading processings by these mechanisms can be coordinated with each other.

[0013]

In the scanner apparatus provided with both a flatbed-type function and an ADF-type function, the ADF mechanism includes a member called a shooter 7 in which the documents to be read are set. The position and orientation of this shooter 7 greatly affect the easiness of paper setting. For example, in the case as shown in FIG. 2(A) in which the ADF mechanism 1 is disposed at the left end of the flatbed mechanism 2 as viewed from the front face of the apparatus, and the shooter 7 is oriented to face the right as viewed from the front face of the apparatus, the setting of paper in the shooter 7 becomes easier for right-handed users, who tend to be the majority. In contrast, in the case as shown in FIG. 2(B) in which the ADF mechanism 1 is disposed at the right end of the flatbed mechanism 2 as viewed from the front face of the apparatus, and the shooter 7 is oriented to face the left as viewed from the front face of the apparatus, the setting of paper in the shooter 7 easier for left-handed users.

[0014]

Further, the ADF mechanism is provided with a member called a stocker 8 that receives and stacks the read documents. As shown in FIGS. 2(A) or (B), when the ADF mechanism 1 is disposed at the end of the apparatus, an

additional setting area for the stocker 8 becomes necessary. For this reason, when there are limits such as the apparatus setting place being narrow, as shown in FIG. 3, the ADF mechanism 1 can be disposed in the central portion of the flatbed mechanism 2 so that the setting area for the apparatus can be minimized. In this manner, the best arrangement of the ADF mechanism relative to the flatbed mechanism changes depending on factors such as the handedness of the scanner user and the place where the apparatus is to be set.

[0015]

Here, as shown in FIG. 1, the ADF mechanism of the present apparatus has the slider 5, which is provided at the portion where the ADF mechanism is coupled to the flatbed mechanism 2 such that the slider 5 is movable to the left and right along the rails 4 provided on the paper-pressing board 3 of the flatbed mechanism 2. Further, since the main body of the ADF mechanism 1 and the slider 5 are coupled by use of the rotating post 6, the main body of the ADF mechanism 1 can be rotated on the slider 5.

[0016]

Due to this, as shown in FIG. 4(A), the shooter 7 is disposed to face the right as viewed from the front face of the apparatus so as to make the setting of paper in the shooter 7 easier for right-handed users. When there are limitations such as the setting place for the apparatus being narrow, the ADF mechanism 1 located at the left end of the

flatbed mechanism 2 is moved to the central portion of the apparatus by moving the slider 5 joined to the ADF mechanism 1 along the rails 4. Therefore, the shooter 7 and stocker 8 can be stored within the width of the apparatus and the area occupied by the apparatus can be minimized.

[0017]

Further, as shown in FIG. 4(B), when a left-handed user uses the apparatus, the ADF mechanism 1 can be rotated on the slider 5 by 180 degrees, whereby the shooter 7 is disposed to face the left side as viewed from the front face of the apparatus so as to make the setting of paper in the shooter 7 easier.

[0018]

As shown in FIG. 5(A), an ADF mechanism support base 9 can be provided to the side of the paper-pressing board 3 of the flatbed mechanism 2. The ADF mechanism support base 9 has rails provided on the side surfaces thereof so as to support the ADF mechanism. Therefore, as shown in FIG. 5(B), the ADF mechanism 1 having been disposed on the paper-pressing board 3 can be slid onto the ADF mechanism support base 9 and mounted thereon. By virtue of this configuration, as shown in FIG. 6(A), the ADF mechanism 1 can be disposed on the ADF mechanism support base 9, whereby, as shown in FIG. 6(B), the opening and closing of the paper-pressing board 3 of the flatbed mechanism 2 is not obstructed. Therefore, reading with the ADF mechanism and reading with the flatbed mechanism can be performed simultaneously. In this manner,

by simultaneously performing the reading with the flatbed unit and the reading with the ADF unit, coordinated image reading can be performed; e.g., an image read with the flatbed unit can be incorporated into a portion of documents continuously read with the ADF unit.

[0019]

It should be noted that the movable coupling mechanism that couples the ADF mechanism to the flatbed mechanism can have a configuration other than the one described above and using a slider. As shown in FIG. 7, coupling protrusions 10 for coupling to the flatbed mechanism can be provided on the bottom surface of the ADF mechanism 1. By inserting these coupling protrusions 10 into attachment holes 11 provided on the paper-pressing board 3, the ADF mechanism 1 can be coupled with the flatbed mechanism 2 at a desired position and with a desired orientation.

[0020]

Alternatively, as shown in FIG. 8, the rails 4 are provided on the paper-pressing board 3 at opposite sides, and the ADF mechanism 1 itself has opposite end portions having a reduced height. The opposite end portions of the ADF mechanism 1 are held between the rails 4 and the paper-pressing board 3 such that the ADF mechanism can be moved to the left and right. Further, by inserting the ADF mechanism between the rails 4 with a reversed orientation, its facing direction can be changed from the right to the left or from the left to the right.